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ABSTRACT

This document contains the transcripts from a workshop to investigate strategies to use in dealing with violence on children's television. The papers given by outside experts include: (1) "Effect of Television Violence on Children and Youth" by Michael Rothenberg, (2) "Implications of the Psychological Effects of Television Programming on Black Children" by Carolyn Block, (3) "Towards a More Daring Middle Ground" by Peter Almond, and (4) "The Role of Fantasy and Play in Child Development with Implications for the Current Generation of Television Watchers" by John Sikorski. An article on television violence is also reprinted from the Congressional Record. A final paper by Sally Williams of the Committee on Children's Television addresses the workshop's major thrust: seeking solutions to the problem of violence on children's television. A bibliography, a resource list of organizations, and a list of publications available from the Committee on Children's Television are also included. (JMB)

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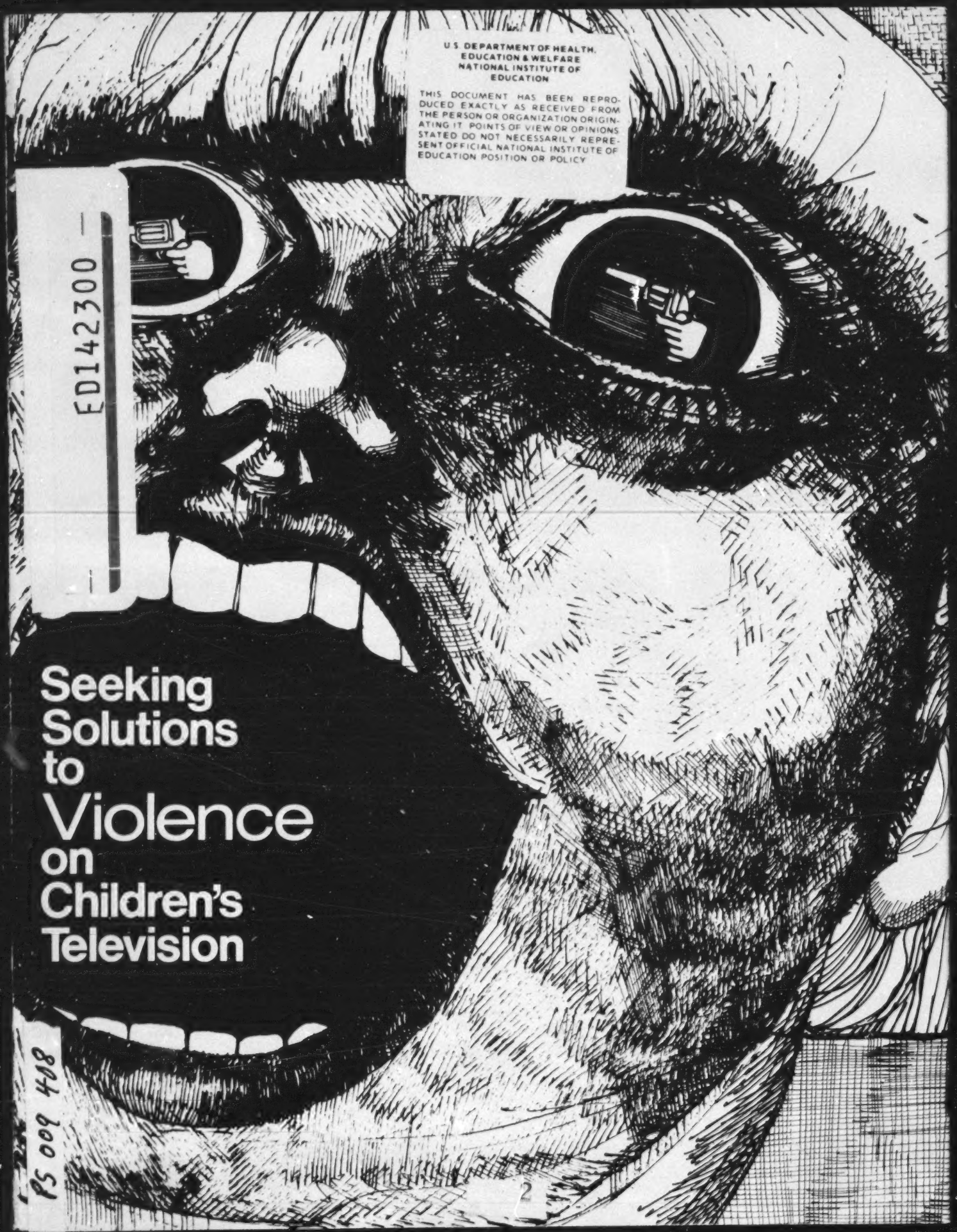

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Seeking Solutions to Violence on Children's Television

PS 009 408

Seeking Solutions to Violence on Children's Television

Transcripts From a Strategy Workshop, May 5, 1976

Sponsored by
The Committee on Children's Television

in cooperation with
The Northern California Academy of Pediatrics
The San Francisco Medical Society
The San Francisco Mental Health Association

San Francisco
Committee on Children's Television, Inc.
February 1977

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Contents

I. Foreword 4

II. Introductory Remarks
"Seeking Solutions to Violence on Children's Television" 4
Stephen L. Kaufman, M.D.

III. Workshop Papers
"Effect of Television Violence on Children and Youth" 5
Michael B. Rothenberg, M.D.

"Implications of the Psychological Effects of Television Programming on Black Children" 9
Carolyn Block, Ph.D.

"Towards a More Daring Middle Ground" 11
Peter Almond

"The Role of Fantasy and Play in Child Development, with Implications for the Current Generation of T.V. Watchers" 15
John B. Sikorski, M.D.

IV. Television Violence 17
Congressional Record, December 18, 1975

V. Strategies for Seeking Solutions to Television Violence 19
Sally Williams

VI. Bibliography 21

VII. Resource List of Organizations ..... Back Cover

VIII. Publications ..... Back Cover

. . . We but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague the inventor.

—William Shakespeare

Foreword

The Committee on Children's Television, Inc. is a San Francisco Bay Area non-profit organization established in 1971 by a racially diverse group of parents and professionals dedicated to improving children's television through an affirmative program of community participation in broadcasting.

The organization's focus on Bay Area projects reflects the fact that the U.S. Congress, respecting diverse regional needs, placed the responsibility for television service with local stations. In 1934, Congress declared the airwaves a scarce national resource and established the Federal Communications Commission to regulate the airwaves in the public interest. To fulfill this mandate, the F.C.C. issues three year licenses to each local station on the condition that the station is operated in the "interest, taste, needs and convenience" of the viewers in the station's area of service. The F.C.C. requires station management to maintain on-going dialogue with the community and to utilize this feedback as a basis for producing local shows and as a basis for selecting television programs from all sources including the networks. Thus, CCT believes that the sustained involvement of the community with local stations is the key to responsive and responsible broadcasting that reflects the multi-ethnic cultural interests of Bay Area viewers.

The community workshop, SEEKING SOLUTIONS TO VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN'S TELEVISION, was organized by CCT in cooperation with the San Francisco Mental Health Association, the Northern California Academy of Pediatrics and the San Francisco Medical Society, to provide Bay Area residents with the opportunity to discuss the effect of television on children and explore the role that television can play to support the growth needs of children.

We are grateful to everyone who participated in the workshop, to the distinguished speakers for granting us permission to print their papers, and to the San Francisco Foundation and Thomas Radecki, M.D. of Hazard, Kentucky who provided us with the funds to publish the transcripts.

It is our sincere hope that children in other communities will benefit from the publication of these transcripts which include strategies for reducing television violence. We urge our readers to share the results of their community projects with us.

Sally Williams, Executive Director
The Committee on Children's Television, Inc.
San Francisco, November 1976

Introductory Remarks

Seeking Solutions to Violence on Children's Television

I would like to welcome all of you on behalf of the San Francisco Medical Society and particularly the Pediatric Section of the Society, on behalf of the Northern California Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the San Francisco Mental Health Association and the Committee on Children's Television. Your presence is an affirmation of your concern about our children and ultimately the future of our society. On behalf of children everywhere, I would like to thank you for being here today.

Organized medicine has long been concerned about the problem of abuse. We have succeeded in conjunction with the government and with social agencies in developing a methodology of discovering, reporting, and treating child abuse. But physical abuse of children is only a small portion of the problem. Emotional child abuse is a much larger and insidious problem for which new strategies of case finding, prevention, and therapy must be devised. Excessive violence on television is one aspect of child abuse, and the subject of today's discussion.

The purpose of this meeting is to devise strategies that will influence producers of childrens T.V.; we must convince advertisers that T.V. has an obligation not to pander to the lowest tastes of the public nor to create programs solely to obtain the largest payoff for the advertising dollar.

These types of policies are crimes in the suites; the executive suites that control T.V. and will lead to crime in the streets involving our children and ourselves.

I do not think that anyone here is an advocate of the amount of gratuitous violence currently programed on commercial television. Yet banning violence indiscriminately, would eliminate *Hamlet* along with *Kojak* and *Oedipus Rex* with the *Streets of San Francisco*. We must take great care as we attempt to change the structure of programs devised for children.

We must also be careful in our enthusiasm, and in our righteous indignation, not to create a formal censorship that, while achieving our goal, would do so by depriving us of a cherished heritage, the freedom of unfettered communication. We must permit our artists to create uninhibitedly, as this is in the best interests of our society; but we must oppose the substitution of carnage for quality, of titillating violence for perception of human relationships. Creating effective strategy to reduce television violence without doing violence to the rights of others, is a major aim of this conference.

Thank you.

Stephen L. Kaufman, M.D.
Chairman, Pediatrics Section
San Francisco Medical Society

Effect of Television Violence on Children and Youth[1]

Michael B. Rothenberg, M.D.

Dr. Rothenberg is a professor of psychiatry and pediatrics at the University of Washington in Seattle. He is well known for his article on the effects of TV violence on children, which appeared in the December 1975 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Dr. Rothenberg serves on the national advisory council of Hospice, Inc., and is a former member of the program committee of the American Academy of Pediatrics. He has published numerous articles and reviews and is now preparing chapters for a basic handbook on child psychiatry and Breaneman-Kelly's textbook of pediatrics. He has recently addressed several prestigious groups regarding the effect of TV violence on children, and is serving as a consultant to the U.S. Congress on the subject.

As a people, we Americans are not unaccustomed to violence. Its thread is woven into the entire fabric of our history, from frontier lawlessness through Chicago gangsterism to presidential assassination. Consider the following statistics, printed on the editorial page of the Oct. 12, 1974, issue of the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

> There are an estimated 200,000,000 guns in the United States, which averages out to one for almost every man, woman and child in the country. A new hand gun is sold every 13 seconds and used ones are traded at the rate of one every 30 seconds. Five million new ones come off assembly lines every year for civilian purchase.
>
> Every four minutes someone is killed or wounded by gunfire. Every three minutes someone is robbed at gunpoint.

On the basis of Nielsen Index figures, the average American child will have viewed some 15,000 hours of television by the time he has been graduated from high school, as compared with his having been exposed to some 11,000 hours of formal classroom instruction. He will have witnessed some 18,000 murders and countless highly detailed incidents of robbery, arson, bombing, forgery, smuggling, beating, and torture — averaging approximately one per minute in the standard television cartoon for children under the age of ten. There is an average of six times more violence during one hour of children's television than there is in one hour of adult television.

Twenty-five percent of the television industry's profit comes from the 7% of its programming directed at children. While the Code of Hammurabi in 2250 BC made selling something to a child or buying something from a child without power of attorney a crime punishable by death, in 1975 AD our children are exposed to some 350,000 television commercials by the time they reach age 18, promising super-power, sugar-power, toy-power, and kid-power.

Finally, against this backdrop, consider these words of Walt Whitman:

> There was a child went forth every day,
> and the first object he look'd upon, that object he became,
> and that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day
> or for many years or stretching cycles of years

The Issues

The literature describing research on the effects of television violence on children has been growing steadily in quantity and quality for the past 25 years. Almost all of it has appeared in social and behavioral science publications, with remarkably little representation in medical journals. Because so much of the research done in this area uses Bandura's social learning theory as at least part of its conceptual framework, we should remind ourselves that this theory states that role models act as stimuli to produce similar behavior in the observer of the role model. This behavior is learned by being imitated, rewarded, and reinforced in a variety of ways. Responses produced often enough and over a long enough period of time maintain the behavior. Bandura outlines three steps necessary for this process: *exposure* to the stimulus, *acquisition* of the "message" being transmitted by the role model, and *acceptance* of that "message."

For practical purposes, I have listed in the references to this article only nine recent reviews of the literature on this subject. Because it outlines so succinctly what the vast majority of these well-designed and statistically significant studies conclude, I would like to concentrate on Richard Goranson's "A Review of Recent Literature on Psychological Effects of Media Portrayals of Violence." Goranson identifies four major issues:

1. Effects on Learning — Are children likely to learn and remember new forms of aggressive behavior by watching the kind of violence presented in the mass media? What are the conditions, if any, that encourage the actual performance of aggressive acts learned through the media?

2. Emotional Effects — Does the repetition of violence in the mass media result in a decreased emotional sensitivity to media violence? Is a decreased emotional sensitivity likely to have any implications for the probability of actual aggressive behavior in real-life situations?

3. The Question of Catharsis — Does watching the kind of aggression shown in the media result in "aggression catharsis" — a "draining off of aggressive energy"? Does the observation of pain, horror, and suffering result in catharsis?

4. Effects on Aggressive Behavior — Are there any conditions of observed violence that can serve either to inhibit or to facilitate aggression?

Here is a summary of the research findings regarding each of these issues:

1. Novel, aggressive behavior sequences are learned by children through exposure to aggressive actions shown on televion or in films. A large proportion of the aggressive behaviors learned by observation are retained over long periods of time if the responses have been practiced at least once. The following conditions encourage the actual performance of aggression: a similarity between the observed setting and the viewer's real setting; when the observed aggression "worked"; when it wasn't punished; and when it was the favored and most frequent method used to attain goals.

2. There is a decreased emotional sensitivity to media violence, as a result of the repetition of violence in the mass media. Classical desensitization takes place, as practiced in modern behavior therapy. There is a decreased aggression anxiety and an increased ability to be violent with others.

3. The original studies of Feshbach, which purported to demonstrate "aggression catharsis," have never been replicated and have been disproved by a number of other studies. These other studies have shown the opposite of catharsis, ie, an increase in the viewer's

[1]Reprinted from the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 234:1043-1046, 1975.

subsequent aggressiveness. There has been no evidence that the observation of pain, horror, and suffering results in catharsis. Goranson speculates that the persistence of a belief in the aggression catharsis notion may stem from a misapplication of Aristotle's original concept of catharsis, which applied only to the "tragic" feelings of grief and fear that could be discharged through active expression by the audience during the performance.

4. Aggression can be inhibited by (1) reminders that the aggression was morally wrong in terms of the viewer's own ethical principles and (2) an awareness of the bloody, painful aftermath of aggression.

Aggression can be facilitated by (1) the cue properties of available targets, ie, stimuli in the postobservation period that have some association with previously observed violence — an association between the victim of the observed violence and the target of the viewer's aggression — and (2) the general state of arousal of the aggressor, eg, when, in experimental settings, the subject is verbally attacked and then exposed to film violence, he later is more aggressive than one who wasn't attacked before being exposed to film violence.

Surgeon General's Report

Television and Social Behavior – A Technical Report to the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior was published in 1972. This five-volume report, summarizing the results of 23 separate research projects, comes to the same conclusions as Goranson did in 1969 — and as researchers did as far back as 1950. Why, then, does so much controversy persist about this Surgeon General's Report?

The controversy arises from the sixth volume of this report, a summary volume written by the Scientific Advisory Committee. It is important to note that when this 12-person committee was being formed, a list of 40 social and behavioral scientists who had been recommended to the Surgeon General's office by the academic community for membership on this committee was presented to representatives of the television industry. The television industry representatives "blackballed" the seven of the 40 listed scientists who had the most outstanding reputations and work in the field of violence research. These seven were replaced by five television network executives. In addition, there was enormous political pressure on the Scientific Advisory Committee to produce a unanimously signed document. As a result, the summary, while it concludes that a causal relationship between violence viewing and aggression by the young was found, is worded so as to lead to misunderstanding. And the *summary* of the summary is flatly misleading, repeatedly using words such as "preliminary," "tentative," and "however" as qualifiers for statements concerning this casual relationship.

Liebert et al, who did some of the research for the Surgeon General's Report, published a book in 1973 in which they offer a painstaking and brilliant review of this entire subject and of the Surgeon General's Report itself. They point out that 146 published papers representing 50 studies — laboratory studies, correlational field studies, and naturalistic experiments — involving 10,000 children and adolescents from every conceivable background all show that violence viewing produces increased aggressive behavior in the young and that immediate remedial action in terms of television programming is warranted.

Other Issues

There are a number of other issues involved that are not central to our concern here with the effects of television violence on children and youth. They deserve at least to be listed: the relationship of child development issues to the content of current television programs (in a word, *none*); the racial, sexual, child, and adult stereotypes portrayed on television; and the effect of television commercials on children's eating habits (an average of 23 commercials an hour, some 60% of which advertise sugar-coated cereals, cookies, snacks, and candy).

The FCC and the NAB

The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) has a television code that states in part:

> Television is seen and heard in every type of American home. These homes include children and adults of all ages, embrace all races and all varieties of religious faith, and reach those of every educational background. It is the responsibility of television to bear constantly in mind that the audience is primarily a home audience, and consequently that television's relationship to the viewers is that between guest and host. . . . By law the television broadcaster is responsible for the programming of his station. He, however, is obligated to bring his positive responsibility for excellence and good taste in programming to bear upon all who have a hand in the production of programs, including networks, sponsors, producers of film and of live programs, advertising agencies, and talent agencies. . . .
>
> Television and all who participate in it are jointly accountable to the American public for respect for the special needs of children, for community responsibility, for the advancement of education and culture, for the acceptability of the program materials chosen, for decency and decorum in production, and for propriety in advertising. This responsibility cannot be discharged by any given group of programs, but can be discharged only through the highest standards of respect for the American home, applied to every moment of every program presented by television.
>
> In order that television programming may best serve the public interest, viewers should be encouraged to make their criticisms and positive suggestions known to the television broadcasters. Parents in particular should be urged to see to it that out of the richness of television fare, the best programs are brought to the attention of their children. . . .
>
> The presentation of techniques of crime in such detail as to invite imitation shall be avoided. . . . Violence and illicit sex shall not be presented in an attractive manner, nor to an extent such as will lead a child to believe that they play a greater part in life than they do.
>
> Racial or nationality types shall not be shown on television in such a manner as to ridicule the race or nationality.
>
> Television broadcasters should exercise the utmost care and discrimination with regard to advertising material, including content, placement and presentation, near or adjacent to programs designed for children. No considerations of expediency should be permitted to impinge upon the vital responsibility towards children and adolescents, which is inherent in television and which must be recognized and accepted by all advertisers employing television.

On the basis of the evidence presented, one can only conclude, as did Liebert and colleagues, that the NAB code "appears to be just a public relations document never intended to guide actual practices." Indeed, on at least one documented occasion in 1963, when the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) attempted to control excessive commercialism in television by suggesting that the NAB's own code be used to set the guidelines, the NAB opposed the plan of using its own code and actually organized committees in each state to lobby against it!

In 1968 a consumer organization, Action for Children's Tele-

vision (46 Austin St., Newtonville, MA 02160), was formed. It was largely through the efforts of this organization and other consumer groups that the FCC developed some new guidelines for children's television in November 1974. All broadcasters are supposed to be in full compliance with these new guidelines by Jan. 1, 1976, but there is no evidence from current programming or from announcements of all 1975 programming that any substantive move toward such compliance has been made.

Some Recommendations and Comments

It is important to remind ourselves that *prosocial* behaviors can also be produced and encouraged by television. The best known example of this is "Misterogers' Neighborhood." There are a number of others, such as "Call It Macaroni," produced by Westinghouse in New York, which takes a group of children to a different part of the country from the one in which they live and teaches them something they have never known or done before; "Big Blue Marble"; "Rainbor Over Seven"; and "Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids."

It would seem to me that the time is long past due for a major, organized cry of protest from the medical profession in relation to what, in political terms, is a national scandal. Such an outcry can and should be accompanied by specific recommendations, based on sound child development principles and the hard data already available to us from 25 years of investigation of the relationship of television violence and aggressive behavior in children, for new kinds of television programming for children and youth.

San Francisco's Committee on Children's Television, Inc. (1511 Masonic Ave., San Francisco, CA 94117), a non-profit organization established by a racially diverse group of parents and professionals dedicated to improving children's television programs through research and an affirmative, active plan for community participation in broadcasting, has developed a set of *General Guidelines for Selecting Television Programming for Children*. These guidelines should be available in every doctor's office, hospital clinic, and child health station. They are as follows:

1. Does the program appeal to the audience for whom intended? (A program for 12-year-olds should be different from a program for 6-year-olds.)
2. Does the program present racial groups positively and does it show them in situations that enhance the Third World child's self-image? (Who has the lead roles? Who is the professional or leader and who is the villain?)
3. Does the program present gender roles and adult roles positively? (Are the men either super-heroes or incompetents? Are the women flighty and disposed to chicanery? Are teenagers portrayed with adult characteristics?)
4. Does the program present social issues that are appropriate for the child viewer and perhaps are something a child can act on at a child's level? (Litter versus atomic fallout, or pet care versus saving wolves.)
5. Does the program encourage worthwhile ideals, values and beliefs?
6. Does the program present conflict that a child can understand and does it demonstrate positive techniques for resolving the conflict?
7. Does the program stimulate constructive activities and does it enhance the quality of a child's play?
8. Does the program separate fact from fantasy? Does it separate advertisements from program content?
9. Does the program present humor at a child's level? (Or is it adult sarcasm, ridicule or an adult remembering what he thought was funny from his childhood?)
10. Does the program have a pace that allows the child to absorb and contemplate the material presented?
11. Does the program have artistic qualities?
12. Has your child seen an appropriate amount of television for the day? (Or is it time to turn off the set?)

Children have neither money nor the vote. We, as parents and as professionals, must be their advocates or they shall have none, for they are certainly no politician's constituency.

As Williams and Crane have said, "To be silent is to acquiesce, and it is clear that, if we truly care about our children, we cannot be silent."

As a result of Dr. Rothenberg's article, the California delegation presented a resolution to the Board of Trustees of the American Medical Association calling for the participation of physicians in the campaign to reduce televised violence. The Board of the AMA unanimously supported the resolution and pledged $23,500 to finance AMA projects. Senator Warren Magnuson informed the United States Senate that the Senate Commerce Committee will study television violence and asked that the AMA Violence Resolution become a part of the Congressional Record. The resolution, as it appeared in the Congressional Record, follows.

American Medical Association
Report of the Board of Trustees: Television Violence
(By Raymond T. Holden, M.D.)

Since the publication of a special communication in *JAMA* on December 8, 1975 by Michael B. Rothenberg, M.D., on "Effect of Television Violence on Children and Youth," there has been considerable discussion concerning medicine's appropriate role in this problem area.

Television violence is a complex problem. It requires the concerted attention and effort of a variety of individuals and groups, including the medical and other professions, parents and parent surrogates, all segments of the broadcasting industry and the Federal Government.

These forces, working together and understanding each other's roles, can make progress in identifying and curtailing the use of more harmful types of TV violence, in discouraging the viewing of violence especially by those most susceptible, and in promoting the development of wholesome and positive programming for children.

In his article Dr. Rothenberg declared that the content of TV programming for children is far more violent than it is for adults, and he called upon organized medicine to sound a cry of protest and to make specific recommendations "for new kinds of television programming for children and youth."

Subsequently a group of consultants, after reviewing the Rothenberg article and other pertinent material, concluded that there are legitimate reasons for medicine to express concern and take affirmative action, even though they found a wide divergence of opinion among investigators on the significance of the effects of violence portrayals.

Based on this report, the Board of Trustees at its meeting May 11-15, 1976, authorized:

(1) Appointment of an ad hoc committee to evaluate new research in this field and to recommend ways in which the medical profession and others can appropriately respond to findings which appear to be valid.

(2) Publication of a booklet, to be made available to physicians for distribution to patients, that would emphasize parental responsibility for children's viewing and indicate what parents should look for in terms of suitable children's programming.

(3) Exploration with the National Association of Broadcasters of the possibility of convening periodic joint AMA-NAB conferences on the impact of TV on children. Such conferences would assess the current status of children's programming, identify problem areas and arrive at mutually acceptable recommendations for improvement.

The Board also recommends that the AMA:

(1) Support full funding of research by the National Institute of Mental Health on the influence of television. Funding should include the training of manpower in all appropriate disciplines to perform high quality investigations. Priority should be given to objective and applicable measurements of television violence and its effects, and to the elucidation of how and to what extent various types and degrees of television violence affect children adversely.

(2) Encourage physicians to emphasize to parents their responsibility in taking an interest in their children's viewing habits and in helping them be selective. Such admonition may be given by physicians in their direct contact with patients; in public appearances, including those on radio and TV shows; and in dealings with community organizations, including school boards. Appropriate channels for conveying this type of information to prospective parents are courses in parenting which are being incorporated in some high school curricula.

(3) Urge television networks and independent stations, in deciding on program content and scheduling, to utilize indices of violence as they are developed. The Federal Communications Commission also should be requested to use such indices, or their methodology, to identify trends in portrayal of violence, as well as to measure the violence content of individual programs. Such indices are now being developed by George Gerbner, dean of the Anneberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, and by the Social Science Research Council. Both are receiving support from the National Institute of Mental Health. Until indices are perfected, television networks and stations should be urged to use a designation such as "parental guidance suggested" on all programs which contain episodes of violence that may have an adverse effect on some children.

In communicating these suggestions to the television industry, the AMA should acknowledge the sincere efforts which have been made by several segments of the industry to reduce violence and improve programming for children.

Fiscal Note: $1,500, ad hoc committee; $10,000, joint conference; $12,000, publication of booklet (these funds are expected to be recouped through the sale of the booklet).

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Implications of the Psychological Effects of Television Programming on Black Children

Carolyn B. Block, Ph.D.

Dr. Block is director of children's services at the Westside Community Mental Health Center. She maintains a private practice in adult and child psychology, and is a lecturer in psychotherapy at the University of California in Berkeley. She is a director of the Bay Area Association of Black Psychologists and a Board Member of the Committee on Children's Television, Inc. She is regarded as a Bay Area and national authority on child development and psychotherapy, and on the impact of media on children. In 1973 Dr. Block presented testimony to the Federal Communications Commission on the effects of television programming on Black children.

As a Black psychologist, I would like to discuss the present and possible future psychological influences of television literature for Black children. In doing this, I shall first briefly discuss the psychological bases for concern and the influence of television on children, in general, and Black children in particular; second, briefly critique present television literature in terms of these psychological principles; and third, present some ideas for more constructive children's television programming for Black children through literature. While my remarks will be addressed specifically to television's impact on Black children, I believe many of these issues should be and are of concern to all parents and producers of children's television who look more thoughtfully into the consequences of what is really being presented to their children.

On the average, an American child spends from two to four hours a day watching television (Lyle, 1972). While this time may also include other activities such as playing, eating, talking, most children who are watching television are seeing at least some of what the program is all about (Liefer and Roberts, 1972). Two to four hours a day is a significant amount of time in a child's life, time which is taken away from other activities such as reading, playing, going outside, etc., (Furu, 1972).

Television viewing is predominantly a passive experience of responding to highly varied visual and auditory experiences centered around informational transmissions. Piaget (Piaget and Inhelder, 1969) has pointed to children's need to learn by acting upon their environment by practicing interactive skills with others and by repeated attempts to organize and impact data to achieve new outcomes. The passive hours so frequently provided by children's television programming detract from opportunities for direct manipulations. Thus, it is even more imperative that the visual and informational content provided by television be oriented to the child's realities and that it provide opportunities for enhancing the expression of active responses from children.

In fact, through television, children are exposed to people, places, and activities they might not otherwise see or would see much less often. However, most of this present exposure is in terms of social behaviors and social norms rather than cognitive and informational processing. It is in the areas of social behaviors, social expectations and social norms that Blacks and other minority children are often misserved by children's television. The influence of television on children's attitudes and expectations has been documented in several studies (Alper and Leedy, 1970); Bogatz and Ball, 1971). Children can and do use anyone, even fantasy objects for models of what they themselves might do (Bandura, 1969), but they are also more likely to model after people who look more like them (Liefer, 1966; Rosekins, 1967). Through this modeling, children can broaden their repertoire of behaviors, thoughts and attitudes about themselves and others. While all of what is learned may not be directly acted out, research has consistently shown that learning does occur and that behaviors can be reproduced when a similar context is presented.

It is in this area of social learning that I believe that television does its greatest violence to children. Repeated studies have shown that children use television to validate their social reality and that Black children tend more to accept as real what is on television. And fortunately, some of what is on television is admirable in terms of the social, emotional and cognitive material presented. Programs such as *Vegetable Soup*, *Electric Company*, *Fat Albert*, *Call it Macaroni*, *Sesame Street*, *Hey Brother*, and *Kidswatch* offer constructive experiences to children. However, these represent only a fraction of the programming children regularly watch.

By way of introduction to what children are learning from television, I would like to present to you a brief taped series of interviews with children.[1] The film was made and edited by one of our local television stations (KPIX) to serve as a stimulus for a panel interview program concerned with the impact of television on minority children. The entire program was aired as part of local station coverage for the Children's Television Fair sponsored by the Committee on Children's Television in San Francisco in April 1975.

Though I was asked in advance to formulate questions for the children, the filming and editing were done by the station. This tape graphically illustrates some of my reasons as a Black child psychologist, for working for change for children's television programming.

Video Tape

My interest in children's television comes from a sense of rage that Black children are being repeatedly subjected to and influenced only by the *J.J.'s*, the *Sanford and Sons*, and the like. Is this truly the best literature that television can offer to Black children? If one takes a look at present Black programming, it is easy to conclude that all Black people are funny and/or stupid, sing, dance, talk tough, play sports and dress well. Black television characterizations, (particularly in a series), rarely depict Blacks in roles of true dominance, leadership, affection, nurturance, success in prestigious occupations, or as informational resources capable of high level reasoning. In short, Black characters are rarely seen as competent, well-functioning human beings who are capable of controlling and impacting their own lives in serious ways.

Where are the truly positive Black models of television? Is it really coincidence that there are no leading Black doctors, lawyers, engineers, police officers, businessmen, or scientists on television? Is it really coincidence that there are no serious Black dramas?

Many people have pointed to *Christie Love* as an example of a Black woman in a leadership role. However, one must look closer than who is named as the star to discover a true leader in a television series. Christie is portrayed as a well-dressed, attractive, sexy, tough, female who gets to the heart of a problem by luck and intuition but who always has to be rescued by a white police lieu-

[1]For example, one interview covered the contrasting views of a teenage girl about *John Boy* and *J.J.* The young Black girl said, "I like to watch *The Waltons* because I like to watch John Boy who is smart in school, he writes poetry, he tries hard to get his ideas across and he is going to college." Then she said, "I like to watch *J.J.* He's hip, he raps, he's funny, he gets bad grades in school and on and on."

tenant. She doesn't have brains enough to carry out a successful case by herself. *Shaft* also had to be rescued by police officers, after "solving" the crime. This is in contrast to the plots involving white private detectives, the Mike Hammers and the like, who usually are found outsmarting the police and often solving the case and rescuing the police department. This contrast is not coincidental. Black characters are continuously shown as only half leaders, half successful. This phenomenon is not just limited to so-called adult programming. Children's programming such as the *Globe Trotters*, and the *Jackson Five* have Black heroes who must rely on white characters for judgment, wisdom and fiscal responsibility. The *Globe Trotters*, for example, had a white "granny" who gave advice and managed their money for them. There are really no Black dramatic programs other than crime and detective series. There is no Black equivalent of Marcus Welby. There is an unsuccessful Black junk dealer who is never shown taking care of any business. At last look, there were no Black female lead characters in any children's programming. The only true Black male leadership characterizations consistently found in the children's television programming are those found in the *Fat Albert* series.

One children's television series, probably the longest playing film series ever, continues to infuriate Black parents and undermine Black children. I refer to the *Little Rascals* or *Our Gang* comedy series. Here the principal Black characters are repeatedly presented as foolish, dumb and ugly with less common sense than a white, three-year-old. There is also the added issue of sexual role confusion in the character of Farina, who is usually assumed to be female and is actually played by a male.

When you look again at the Black comedy series available during family viewing hours, it again becomes clear as to what kind of social learning our Black children are being exposed. Comedy in Black shows tends to undercut and negate true emotions and strivings. Real feelings and social concerns are belittled by J.J. of *Goodtimes* and are only useful as sources of sarcasm and ridicule. In *Goodtimes*, his sister's social frustrations and anxieties and his younger brother's educational strivings are made to seem riduculous and foolish in the light of J.J.'s fun loving, live-only-for-today attitude. The fact that J.J. becomes an empty, isolated and frustrated human being is never directly stated.

If television programming is going to be truly responsible to the intellectual, social and psychological needs of Black children, the programming offered must include a variety of social learning situations. I believe that there are now five Black family comedy series. Where are the serious programs for Black children? Where is a Black *Perry Mason*, a Black *John Boy*, even a Black *Bionic Man*?

I believe that part of the relative unsuccessfulness of Black characterizations in present programming is due to the reliance upon non-Black writers and producers. If the *Fat Albert* series can be viewed as a Black *Our Gang* comedy series, the contrast between true comedy and social riducule becomes really obvious. In more contemporary writing, the social stereotyping has become more subtle and perhaps unconscious but it is inevitably there. Since the salient aspects of Black life experiences can only be accurately described for and depicted by other Blacks, constructive programming for and about Black children must necessarily be conceived, written and produced by Black artists.

Contrary to popular belief, there is an extensive Black literature which can be adapted to provide fresh and innovative children's television programming. There is a large body of Black child and general literature which emphasizes human relationships and feelings which can be incorporated into program formats. These might include Afro-American and African folk tales, novels, short stories, and folk poems from existing literature. The writings of Ama Bontenps, Arthur Mitchell, Rossevelt Grady, Terry Burger, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, and many others provide the basis for a new literature for children's television programming. Books such as the *Jungle Book*, for example bring out issues of loyalty, protectiveness, and responsibility and at the same time provide adventure and drama in many continuing subplots. Biographies of persons such as Charles Drew, Phyllis Wheatley, Mary Bethune, Martin Luther King, Jr., Harriet Tubman and others would provide other opportunities for positive role models, a sense of history and add much needed literary diversity to children's television programming. A second approach to more creative children's television programming responsive to the needs of Black children would be through the consistent use of new works designed for television and film media by contemporary Black media artists and writers. There are literally hundreds of small Black production companies and Black writers of children's stories who could and should be tapped for their creative products. Many presently produce high quality, creative products on miniscule budgets, with minimal encouragement from the mass media. Groups such as Nguzo Saba Films in San Francisco, now have a repertoire of small, short films and video tapes which tap areas of Black life and social realities which were appropriate for children's television viewing.

In summary, the psychological literature is replete with examples of the many ways television can and does impact the psychological growth of our children. When one takes a look at these psychological findings, in combination with the present programming, the results present an alarming picture of future hopes, expectations and identity of Black and other minority children.

It is my hope that through a more creative combination of the arts and children's television programming, the psychological and emotional needs of Black and other children may be better served in the future.

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Towards a More Daring Middle Ground

Peter Almond

Mr. Almond is Associate Director of the Carnegie Council on Children, a privately funded national commission studying the forces which influence children growing up in America. He has contributed to Council studies on television and its influence on children and family life, and is developing a television series based on the Council's findings and perspectives. Mr. Almond is working with producer Norman Lear on a book concerning three well known television series, "Good Times," "Maude," "All in the Family." He has worked as a producer at television station WNET in New York, and has written "A Place to Learn, A Place to Be," a Ford Foundation book-length account of teenagers growing up in the Berkeley-San Francisco region in the late 1960s. Currently, Mr. Almond is collaborating on a screenplay and writing articles entitled, "The New Dream Hearth" for *Kids' Catalogue*.

These comments have several possible headings. As an old headline reader maybe it comes too naturally, and even more naturally, in this setting — this city and region which I dearly love — they could subsume themselves under the single word heading: POTENTIAL. Now I know this is a word that has regional significance as well: California and particularly the Bay Region have given rise to a mounting number of growth and potential movements — too many to report here. But television is potential, too.

I like television. In a setting like this, a comment to that effect ranks as some kind of heresy . . . But I like television. Having confessed that, I have to acknowledge at once that I recognize the contradictions the statement involves.

But I like California, too. I love California. Talk about contradictions . . . California is a living, breathing contradiction. You have given us Ronald Reagan, now you are in the process of giving us Governor Jerry Brown. Judging the former by his television manner, he appears to be decent and generous, a truly graceful fellow. While Jerry Brown has managed to make even meditation an act of arrogance, and has elevated "do-nothingism" to a high art, has imbued it with sacred and profound qualities.

The state embraces some of the most impressive stretches of land, and has protected a great deal of its inspiring coastline. Yet real estate eats away at that same land at a discouraging pace, to the extent that a genuine horse race exists between the drives of people and nature. It is a very basic struggle.

Television, like California (its long home) — particularly American television — is a non-stop, long running contradiction.

Or is it? I want to try to take some perspective on this reasonable assumption in the course of these comments this afternoon. In doing that I want to refer briefly to television's short history (stretching things, television is not quite forty); to certain evidence which other speakers here today will address in far greater detail — evidence concerning television's impact on our young; on a variety of alternatives other national systems illustrate, systems of television which vary dramatically — from the American system. I also want to integrate some of these TV-specific observations with some of the general directions the Carnegie Council on Children studies (with which I am affiliated) are taking.

Finally, I want to consider television as environment — an integral element of American life in the past 20 years or so and on into the forseeable future, particularly in light of who watches and under what conditions. In doing this, I hope we can find our way towards a more daring middle ground — a perspective that yields greater generosity in our attitudes about television and what it means to watch it. Before doing that though, I want to comment briefly on some developments which may suggest the best and only hope to building a sound and ongoing response to the structure of American television.

Perhaps the most significant development in the effort to influence the policies of television makers, and, at the same time, engage viewers on the subject of TV's impact on children, results from locally organized efforts, such as The Committee on Children's Television (based here in San Francisco, and co-sponsor of today's conference). In Boston, Action for Children's Television (ACT) has galvanized and focused the debate on advertising and a broad range of issues which arise in television viewing habits of young people. ACT and its president, Peggy Charren, can be credited to a large extent with putting children's television on the map of national issues. The organization has adopted a steady and sound approach to its relations to the television networks and public agencies involved with television, at once achieving respect and attention, while remaining critical and unaligned (except for the interests of better, less commercial television). The networks have begun to respond to these organizations, aware now that they — the television officials — can no longer program and advertise without regard to the interests of children.

Or can they?

In a very grim statement, Paul J. Mundie, speaking on behalf of the Committee on Children's Television (the Federal Communications Commission: January, 1973), describes the dismal state of programming available for children in America. Mr. Mundie reported on an analysis of the license renewal applications of Bay Area stations. This study, called Television and Children's Needs assessed the extent of efforts by local stations to improve children's television. "The analysis," Mr. Mundie said in his testimony, "showed that Bay Area stations had little or no interest in significantly improving children's television in the Bay Area. A review of the ascertainment sections of the renewal applications would suggest the children as a segment of the viewing audience did not exist. . ."

This account is significant on two counts. First, it reminds us of the importance of local watch-dog efforts such as the Children's Committee. Consciousness does not raise itself in even the most enlightened community. Some group or body must continue to present the case, muster the issues, and effectively communicate them. It is long and thankless work, but it is crucial. The CCT efforts involving the process of informing the general community — as with its remarkable Television Fair last year; its cooperative efforts with other concerned professional and citizen groups; and its presence and challenge before local television stations — all serve as illustrations of what ought to be done to make a difference in television for our children. This is a model other communities should follow, and I think before long the efforts of Sally Williams and her colleagues at CCT will be studied and replicated elsewhere. They deserve this kind of attention.

Secondly, a particular phrase from Mr. Mundie's testimony is both chilling and revealing: ". . .the children as a segment of the viewing audience did not exist. . ." This comment connects to some of the work and thinking of the Carnegie Council on Children. One of the questions around which some of our ideas have been organized is "Are We a Child Centered Society," or as one of Ken Keniston's papers is titled, "Do We Really Like Children?" The findings as presented by CCT are in this connection really no surprise. To a great extent, in many sectors of our society children *do not* exist.

Children of course do exist in the eyes of TV planners: they are an important profit segment. Commercial television, as you know, makes an enormous profit off of children's programming. It is one of the higher profit proportion sectors of the industry. In other words, you spend less and make more. Their interest, it turns out, is in

revving up the child to become skirt or pants-tugging household consumer lobbyists.

In a first-rate study of the economics of commercial television for children, William Melody describes the process by which children are used to get the parent or adult around the house to buy products advertised on television. Melody points out that this selling job is done at a time of minimum adult intervention. The TV people want to get one on one with a child to get their unmediated pitch through. Then the child goes to work on the adult.

This picture of TV, as provided by Melody and as summarized in the CCT testimony, gives us an idea of what we are up against when we address the subject of television and its influence over our children. The nature of the beast, so to speak, is that of an uncaring, essentially exploitative — let's just say an institution whose concern for our children's well-being is not high among its priorities.

TV exists (in America) to make a profit, not to enliven our children. As Mr. Mundie's testimony argues, children do not exist as an active concern for most television planners. Except for the profit considerations. There are good people all through the system, either in the industry or the regulatory agencies, but the system takes a narrow approach to its function: the profit motive and protection of same. ABC, NBC and CBS are elements of companies which do everything from renting cars to building guided missile systems.

One of my colleagues on the Council, Laura Nader, a Berkeley anthropologist, has commented that our children today are raised by RCA, HEW, General Motors and the like. It's worth thinking about. They are raised by vast, essentially unaccountable institutions which hold enormous sway over children and family life. Despite professing care and appreciation for children, and despite our commitment to what is called "family sanctity," the family and child are continually invaded by unchecked influences, whose primary obligation is something besides the well-being of the child or the family. Companies move people around, with a minimum of concern for its impact on family life or the child's condition; welfare policy — even today — seems to encourage the break-up of adult family members. New functions are required of the family, comparable to the regulatory function in the face of this onslaught of influences, whether it be television or social policy, company procedures or community systems. Adult family members — already under pressures and burdens of their own — are required to intervene, or administer, or watch-dog for these new and ill-defined influences. This conditions applies across social group lines; it may take different forms, depending on the social setting, but it's happening. It takes a lot of work, watching out for your children.

The pressures on families are enormous. Making the modern family operate smoothly requires extensive support. Families that are economically better-off can pay for an array of resources from recreation to specialized health needs. But when a family seeks public support to meet the same, or often more dire needs, it is met with rejection and worse: to need public support implies a kind of failure in our culture. Not only do they get inadequate services, they are stigmatized for needing them. We do not, however, disdain the family that needs the reading specialist, the doctor specialist, the nanny and the nursery school — when they can pay for them on the open market.

In other words, every family needs support. Few can afford it.

Remarkably, the United States stands far down the list of modern industrialized societies in infant mortality figures. At least a dozen other countries provide the mother and child better care.

A quick and comparative look at television suggests similar failings in the American system. We are one of three countries which allow commercial advertising of any kind in children's television (Canada recently removed all commercials during children's programs.)

It has reached the point where a recent Boston University survey can claim that the typical American child sees an average of one commercial every 2.9 minutes while viewing television. Should we be surprised by television's commercial character? David Potter, the late and distinguished Stanford historian, has given us a wry and telling insight into the structures and values of the television medium in America. His historical perspective on television, an essay that appeared over a decade ago, describes three conditions which have "shaped the structure and determined the character of American television." These include what Potter calls the technical factor, meaning the limited availability of channels (thus limiting the range and variety of shows); the economic condition, meaning "namely that the financial basis of television has been advertising, and this has meant that a great system of public communications was financed by payments from producers who were not primarily concerned with public communications but with the sale of whatever it is that they happen to produce." Potter's third consideration covers the phenomenon of the mass audience and the emergence of the mass society. "Is this primarily a medium of public entertainment," Potter asks, "which happens to be supported financially by advertising, or is it primarily an apparatus for the marketing of consumer goods which uses public communications as part of the marketing process?" This set of questions becomes particularly striking when we consider television's influence over American young people. Even if we fail to fully grasp the nature of its impact, we acknowledge its importance. Potter then provides an answer to the question he has raised. "I do believe," he writes:

> "that television falls distressingly short of fulfilling its social potentialities and that it gives little of the nourishment to the human spirit which a great and vital medium of communication ought to give. But I also believe it is unrealistic to be shocked when an advertising medium resorts to advertising practices. Men who live by advertising must sell, just as men who live by soldiering must fight and men who live by politics must make compromises. A person who wants to understand soldiering or politics, or television will not do so by attributing the shortcomings of the system to the personal qualities of the men involved in it. Instead, he will examine the dynamics of the system itself. . ."

For our consideration of children's television, I think it worthwhile to add one other perspective. That is the comparative analysis: both structural and specific as concerns programming for children. How do other societies view and then use the medium of television?

Harry Skornia, in his book *Television and Society*, observes that the United States is alone among major television users to *fail* to debate openly and consistently the role of television in American society. Right now, for example, the British are awaiting the findings of a Royal Commission, a study which will recommend directions for British television, weighing in particular the question of new channel allocation. This formal review occurs each decade in England (the political parties and public interest groups regularly debate TV issues), an assertion of the principle of oversight and public responsibility for the structure and values of British television.

In Holland, television outlets are allocated to social, religious, union and political groups according to their proportion of the Dutch population. Thus, there is a Catholic broadcast center with its own airwaves, a trade union station and so on.

It is to Sweden, however, that I want to draw your attention, particularly regarding their children's programming. Several years ago, when Sweden established a new state network, its children's division issued a statement of principles. Among them is the straightforward assertion that the quality of (and therefore resources invested in) children's programming be equivalent to that of adult programming. And further, that the children's unit not be restrained from treating any issue however controversial that is treated in an

appropriate manner for children. The guideline principles also state that early evening time be set aside for viewing appropriate for both child and family, expressly in order that they watch, if possible, together.

Well, it's one thing to promise a lot, and another to deliver. I am convinced, having seen some twenty or thirty hours of representative Swedish children's television that they have made good on those promises, and have given the rest of us some genuine models for what children's television could be like. The programs are clever and imaginative, varied in form and purpose. Contrasted to American television, what is most striking is the scope of the productions, their quality and style. Children's TV in Sweden presents extended fantasy stories, done in full-length 90 minute to two hour productions, filling the child and family viewer with imaginative experience worthy of the finest Scandinavian folk tales (in fact, several Swedish TV series are adaptations of the great Scandinavian legends). In addition, such themes as inter-group relations are treated, in the Swedish case involving relations between Lapps (from the northern-most sections of Sweden) and Swedes; between immigrant workers from Southern Europe and Swedish children. But other themes emerge as well: loneliness, body awareness, death, the child's experience of family breakup and the like. Virtually nothing is left untouched; yet everything is produced with style and taste and appropriate care for the age level of the viewer. Programs are previewed with announcements urging adults and young people to watch together and discuss the program afterwards. A series for young children, called simply "Why?. . .", is based on questions which children gave to TV program planners (Why does the sun shine, etc.?)

In all, these programs challenge and thrill their viewers, taking the children on excursions to the mind's backwaters where fantasy and reality combine to stimulate and develop various levels of consciousness.

If I can at this point impose an abrupt transition, I would shift direction to a central theme introduced earlier. That of Potential. Swedish television, as I am interpreting it, speaks to the viewer's potential, broadening, challenging and deepening it. But all communication has this potential. Some we have to work on more than others. What I have in mind is the dilemma American television (TV at all times of day, for all ages) presents us with. Since we know that children watch a great deal of TV, and virtually half of that time is devoted to so-called adult, or evening time programming, the discussion must include all TV. But beyond this fact is the problem, or what I would like to construe as an opportunity, to communicate about TV — any and all TV — and recognize the processes by which it is reaching us. And it is here that I think we have a problem.

In one of the most obvious yet still striking lines every uttered in theatrical film, Luke, the autonomous soul, tells the Sheriff at the prison work farm: ". . .Sheriff, what we have here is a failure in communications. . ." The film, *Cool Hand Luke* proceeds to reveal that problem among his friends as well as his enemies. Those of us concerned with children's TV and attempting to talk about it — to communicate, really — must begin to distinguish our audiences and purposes, and overcome our own failures in communication.

Today I have very briefly looked at structural factors in U.S. television: the nature of the institution which produces most television in America — large commercial institutions whose values are summed up in the profit motive; we have considered alternatives to that — the way other countries handle television. We have acknowledged that it has been this way since the beginning — that television in America has always been a profit oriented system whose product just happened to be entertainment and, where concerning children, just happened to become a major instructional element in their lives. (Consider, by contrast, if the public schools were commercially-based, and operated to turn a profit.) We have also seen that other national systems operate in strikingly different fashion with very different assumptions about its place in the society. Somehow, here in America, we missed that set of questions and values which guide the television structures in many other countries.

We know how to communicate on issues such as these. This is not to say that it is easy, nor likely to yield immediate results. But this effort requires facts and figures, carefully mounted arguments, a steady and long-term debate with the institutions which control and regulate the medium.

The communication problem operates elsewhere. We have considered a third factor. Family life today amounts to a profoundly demanding and difficult task. Some of the information with which the Carnegie Council is grappling goes like this: In two-parent families, the proportion of working mothers has reached one-third, and is growing rapidly. With the increasing number of single-parent families, most children have either one or both parents working outside of the home. In the years between 1960 and 1972, the proportion of children being raised in single-parent families grew from one in twenty to a level of one in eight.

Developments like these do not imply that individual parents care less for children. Instead, it creates a picture of the family responding to mounting social and economic pressures. The adult/parent operates in a pressure cooker which she or he does not control.

Acknowledging that the bulk of TV viewing is essentially "indiscriminate" — that is, the viewing (adult and child alike) is "what's on" — researcher, critic, concerned adult will benefit from communication — just talking about what they have seen. We tend to do this already to some extent but would benefit from even more.

Here is the description one media anthropologist, Edmund Carpenter, provides of the television process:

> Media are really environments, with all the effects geographers and biologists associate with environments. We live inside our media. We are their content. TV images come at us so fast, in such profusion, they engulf us, tattoo us. We're immersed. It's like skin diving. We're surrounded, and whatever surrounds, involves. TV doesn't just wash over us and then go "out of mind." It goes into mind, deep into mind. The subconscious is a world in which we store everything, not something, and TV extends the subconscious.

Carpenter continues: "Such experiences are difficult to classify in words. Like dreams or sports, they evade verbal classification." Then Carpenter reminds us of everyday interaction with children:

> Asked where he (or she) has been, a child who has been running, shouting, slipping in the mud, smelling autumn leaves, eating hot dogs, replies, "Out." Asked what he has been doing, he says, "Nothing." Finally the parent extracts an acceptable answer: "Playing baseball." But that reply is adequate only to the parent. The child knows how inadequate words are for any total sensory experience.

An equivalent interaction also occurs daily about TV viewing. Most adults and children ignore TV experience as an area of discussion. Carpenter offers a further description of its vague nature: "Any picture is a mass of information in a flash. A written caption or narration may classify bits of this information, telling us what to look at and how to respond to it. But most information on television is unclassified — like a telephone directory that hasn't been alphabetized."

Here, I think is one of our challenges. Regardless of content and quality this process goes on, and we take it in. Or it takes us in. "Unlike print," Carpenter continues, "TV doesn't transport bits of classified information. Instead it transports the viewer. It takes his spirit on a trip, an instant trip." And how "trippable" we all are,

especially children, growing sponges for experience and information that they are.

Adult involvement around TV experience — not necessarily intervention or mediation — with children will begin to sort out and elaborate the child's viewing experience. Further, it will help connect the adult to a crucial and extensive aspect of the child's experience. Talking about TV, in an open-minded way, not just what to watch or how much, will help bring child and adult closer together. It will also help disabuse the child of some of the distortions TV brings.

This approach, however, requires a different attitude about TV. It falls into a realm requiring media awareness beyond previous understanding of that idea, particularly as it applies to adult/child involvement.

Here, the elusive middle ground comes into view. Professionals who comment in one way or another about television must begin to understand more about their audiences, acknowledging that different statements and points of view may be necessary for different groups of people. While this may smack of "talking out of both sides of our mouths," I am talking about a fairly basic and self-evident distinction. Television officials — whether network officials, local station representatives, or representatives of public institutions (Congress, FCC, FTC) — must be confronted with the evidence of TV's influence and the distortions that are among those influences. They must be made to see their responsibility for the education of our children; they must be dared to change their approach to children's TV, especially the profit motives that dominate commercial children's television. After all, who ever gave TV tenure? Who bestowed authority upon the network and commercial interests which control most programming?

In the meantime, having reviewed various aspects of the current television environment and seeing it in the context of complex and demanding family life in America, the communication of professionals must reduce the inherent judgemental tone it adopts when denouncing the "harmful" effects of television. If we want to gain the attention of average parents and adults who work and live with children on these issues, we must do so bearing in mind the difficult circumstances within which they operate. At the same time, as Carpenter indicates, we must comprehend the nature of the media environment we inhabit whether high or low quality, and understand its subtle and pervasive influence: these TV dots in which we are immersed may be invisible but they are indelible, too. John Culkin, the founder of the Center for Understanding Media, put it in his typically wry and acute way: "It has always made good sense for people who live on water to learn how to swim."

We can undertake this process of classifying — breaking down the dream, or learning to live with television, you might say — not as capitulation, not giving up (as if to say, "what else can you do?"), but as an opportunity to *intervene* in the massive TV onslaught; *grow* with it, and *connect* one person to another, one process to another, one generation to another.

At the same time, we should not forget how to ask the question "What if?" What if we not only recognized television's power over us all and recognized the important experiences it brings our children? Then, why not permit ourselves the dream of truly entertaining, diverse and enriching television?

After all Governor Brown promises to fight for strong Coastal Protection legislation, suggesting the capacity not only to re-think our priorities, but to act on them as well. This country has paved over its airwaves in much the same way it has paved over the countryside with concrete and asphalt. It has allowed real estate development to spread without consideration of its ultimate impact. Perhaps now we are beginning to see the consequences, and finally are deciding to do something about this burgeoning commercial progress, to plan substantially for what remains of our resources. Graduation speakers and Presidents like to speak of our children as "this country's great resource . . ." Maybe we'll begin to act on those truly noble commitments.

Meanwhile, organizations like the Committee on Children's Television will carry out the hard work in showing us the way to an effective middle ground, not necessarily a higher ground. This calls for a posture and program that embodies both our hopes for television and children but our shared reality as well. This is a tremendously difficult task: staying on the middle ground and maintaining appropriate communication and follow-up with such divergent audiences and interests (talking at once to concerned parents and commercial television officials); a middle ground yet ultimately a more daring one.

The "potential" with which I began is seen in the medium itself and in ourselves, a capacity to change our standards and broaden our comprehension based on the current media environment. If California can begin to protect its coastline, after decades of environmental abuse, we can expect to set the same standards (after years of similar abuse) for television. In the interim, organizations like Committee on Children's Television will set the tone for this ongoing dialogue.

The Role of Fantasy and Play in Child Development, with Implications for the Current Generation of T.V. Watchers

John B. Sikorski, M.D.

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When I began gathering material for this conference, I was planning to focus my remarks on the role and function of fantasy and play in normal child development.

I thought a useful way to present this material would be to begin with a visual portrayal of some of these issues in normal child development, especially as our concern at this conference focuses on the nature, quality, and meaning of the flood of audiovisual inputs our children are receiving.

This particular film, "Child's Play and the Real World" is delightful, informative, and I hope, has provoked our own playful imaginations to reconsider our own, and our children's experience; perhaps, to wonder, fantasize, what might be happening to children whose opportunities to play in the fashions depicted here, are subverted or preempted, for whatever reasons, by the appeal and convenience of T.V.

As a child psychiatrist who is primarily a clinician, I'd like to start out by sharing with you a certain structure — an interrelated set of propositions and assumptions from which I will speak:

First: Children learn what they experience; learning being defined as an increase in strength or probability of a response, based on an interaction of maturational readiness and experience with the world.

Second: Experience has somewhat different cognitive and effective meaning at different stages and levels of development, with which there are critical phases of optimal skill acquisition and conflict resolution.

Third: Meaning is derived from the social and physical context of the experience within which the content of the experience takes place. (Meaning is derived from the context as well as content of experience).

Fourth: All of what we experience is not readily available to our conscious awareness or immediate recall, but may be triggered by effective, perceptual, or symbolic factors to motivate or influence behavior. (Basically referring here to unconscious motivation and psychic determinism).

It seems to me that these propositions are implicit in any meaningful discussion of child development and experience.

In a general sense, when do children start to learn, fantasize, imagine, play and what are the functions of these activities?

Rene Spitz, studying the first year of life, points out that the child at 12 weeks of age responds with a smile to a human face or facsimile thereof, and of course by 8 months — can distinguish familiar from unfamiliar faces — the classic 6-8 month period of anxiety known so well to pediatricians, mothers and baby sitters. Spitz goes on to state, "from the first year of life, there is recognition of need gratifying objects, and vision becomes the leading perceptual modality for reality testing, for adaptation, for the organizing of the surroundings, and for the registering of all that is in the child's memory banks."

Other authors (e.g., Lois Barkely Murphy), describe the infant learning to play at the mother's breast, or in the securing, cuddling arms of its primary familiar care-taker. Erikson calls this autocosmic play, which begins with and centers upon the infant's own body. This play contributes to the effective and cognitive awareness of self and differentiated perception of the mothering person. For optimum development, this intensely pleasureable interactive process leads to the development of new perceptions, curiosity, and ultimately the development of language, i.e., "the mother's tongue."

I'd like to define a few terms here in the development of this theme.

a) *Image* is a mental representation derived in part from perceptual or probably initially visual, or sensory experience.

b) *Fantasy or Daydream* is a fabricated mental picture or chain of mental pictures or events; it is a form of thinking dominated by unconscious material involving primary processes, i.e. wish fulfillment and immediate gratification. (Fantasy is to wakefulness as dream is to sleep.)

c) *Imagination* refers to the flow and direction of fantasy — a completely subjective but cognitive and effective experience. It's the ability of people to make vivid for themselves, within their own thought processes, material already at least partially experienced through some auditory, visual, olfactory or kinesthetic process, about which there is some emotional component. I don't believe one can use one's imagination without having feelings involved. Children gradually learn to differentiate internal subjective events, i.e. fantasies, imagination, from external events perceived through the senses. This differentiation, known as the development of object relations and reality testing, is optimally accomplished within the context of continuing, nurturing realistic attachment relationship.

In the process of this differentiation, internal from external, self from attachment figure, the child seems to go through relatively universal, relatively predictable stages of fantasy (internal) and play (external) activity. For our purposes we can paraphrase Erikson's description of play as a more or less carefree engagement in open ended activity within some prescribed limits. It is a sort of borderline phenomenon — something one has chosen to do without being compelled by urgent interests or impelled by strong passions. It is fun and it is engaging. (Description applies to adult play as well as child's play).

There are three major theories of play and for that matter, fantasy:

1) Surplus energy theory of play, or tension reduction theory of fantasy; that is, the function of play and fantasy is to reduce tension and drive, and leave child in a more docile or satisfied state.

The second major theory is the cathartic theory of fantasy and play; i.e., these activities offer an opportunity to work out past traumas, and find imaginary non-harmful relief from frustrations and conflicts.

These two theories or some variation thereof, in my opinion, are usually invoked by investigators or by apologists utilized by the advertising industry.

The major theory of imagination and play which I want to present, and which I think is best illustrated in my film is what can be called the ego integration theory best described by Erikson, Bettelheim, Piers, Murphy and others. The major ingredients of this theory involve the developmental concepts that I have described above; the interplay of ongoing experience, imagination, and a striving toward mastery of language, skills and age-appropriate development tasks, leading toward an integrated and balanced character structure.

Let me briefly illustrate from children's literature, nursery rhymes and fairy tales, as well as children's games, the concepts of developmental tasks and sense of mastery.

The peekaboo games of the first year of life deals with the reality of object loss, the fantasy of that loss, and the mastery of the anxiety about the loss when the object in the games reappears. About 10-12 months of age a game of "pick up and throw" usually appears, soon to be followed by the game of "copy cat" or "imitation". By 16 to 18 months, the toddler begins to show interest in demonstrating its skills at mothering dolls or stuffed animals, shows great interest in pull toys and is heavily invested in some transitional object, dealing again with the separation.

Individuation phase of development. By age 2-3 there is more complicated symbolic and rudimentary problem solving play, beginning to involve simple toys and later, other children, initially in parallel, and then cooperative play.

At a higher developmental level — nursery school age — hide and seek takes on special meaning, dealing with the fantasy and anxiety of the lost child and the searching parent, and vice versa.

Similarly, classic children's stories, nursery rhymes and fairy tales say little about the complexities of contemporary society, but do say much about the inner universal problems of human development and its vicissitudes, helping to bring some comforting resolution to the turmoil of the child's own feelings about his own predicament.

I. Mary had a little lamb,
Its fleece was white as snow
And everywhere that Mary went
The lamb was sure to go.

II. It followed her to school one day
That was against the rules
It made the children laugh and play
To see a lamb at school.

III. And so the teacher turned it out,
But still it lingered near,
And waited patiently about,
Til Mary did appear.

IV. Why does the lamb love Mary so?
The eager children cry.
Why Mary loves the lamb, you know,
The teacher did reply.

It takes no stretch of our imaginations to acknowledge that this nursery rhyme is not about a school girl and her pet, but about the longing for reuniting of the mother child diad in all of us, when separation has taken place.

I quote from Bruno Bettelheim's article on the uses of enchantment.

"For a story to truly hold a child's attention it must entertain him and arouse his curiosity, but for a story to enrich his life, it must stimulate his imagination, help him develop his intellect and clarify his emotions, be attuned to his anxieties and aspirations, give full recognition to his difficulties, suggest solutions to the problems that perturb him, and promote confidence in himself and his future. . . . childhood is the time to learn how to bridge the immense gap between inner experiences and the real world."

What of our children, whose quality of nurturance, development, or environmental circumstances do not permit optimal and appropriate support to their imaginations and free play? What of those children whose development is skewed by undue trauma, neglect, rejection or ineptitude? (I'm not talking about children from reasonably secure alternate life style homes). As child psychiatrists and play therapists, we are trained to evaluate play and the fantasies and imaginations masked behind it, in terms of its unique, individualized meaning, according to the specific developmental history of the child, taking into account the form, content, direction, pattern of momentum and flow, symbolization, verbalizations, perceptable affects, absorptions, regressions and resolutions shown in the play. It has long been known that children project in their free play activities, the basic time-space, attitudinal and relationship patterns of their own lives.

In a study of children from extremely deprived and impoverished backgrounds, Louis B. Murphy showed that these children seemed more inhibited and lacking in the range of curiosity, spontaneity, vocabulary and creative play, and seemed to engage in more regressive sensory motor play, even though they appeared more streetwise, than children not so classified as reared in deprived settings.

It is clear from many studies from different perspectives that the nature and quality of children's attachment and modes of life experience have direct bearing on their development of imagination, creativity, language acquisition and self concept.

Dr. Dorothy Cohen of the Bank Street College of Education, New York City, focuses on more recently developed research on the total impact of T.V. watching on children's development. She implicates the inherently passive nature of having children as mere spectators of someone else's activity. She writes, "There is a decrease in imaginative play and an increase in aimless running around, non-investment in play materials, low frustration tolerance, poor persistence, and confusion about reality and fantasy." My own initial thought when I read this was that it sounded like the description of the so-called hyperactive child syndrome, which incidently was unknown 25 years ago. It has become epidemic in the past 15 years.

My own clinical judgment tells me there is another issue in addition to the passivity that is detrimental; that is, the context of almost solitary isolation and minimum of interaction or feedback and virtually no consensual validation for the validity or meaning of the effects provoked by the program content. This critical factor was described to me recently by the father of a troubled 10 year old boy with a number of emotional and learning problems. The family decided to see the movie BARRY LYNDON. As they were walking out of the theater, our youngster turned to his mother and with tears still in his eyes, said that when the boy in the movie died, he started to cry and was surprised to look around and to see other people in the theater also crying. The validation of his feelings and the meaning of the whole experience as discussed with his parents was very important, not only in the context of the treatment of this child, but also has serious implications for what tends to be lacking in the thousands of hours of T.V. bombardment which our children are experiencing.

Recently, I was happy to see the emergence of some studies which I think are identifying and exposing the real Pied Piper in our T.V. programming. The November-December 1975 issue of the *Harvard Business Review* published a study by Berer and Associates. The findings suggest that:

> All children under the age of 11 are vulnerable to manipulation by irresponsible advertisers, but that some age groups are more vulnerable than others . . . children's skill in acquiring impressions of reality from advertising exceeds their skill in understanding them logically. Young children are not uncomfortable with the disparity between these skills and are not upset if advertising is misleading. By middle childhood, however, the conflict between the two

> skills becomes so frustrating that, in order to resolve it, children become absolutist, they decide, for instance, that all advertising is a sham. What is most disconcerting to marketers and parents is that by age 11, when the 2 skill levels begin to coincide, most children have already become cynical — ready to believe that like advertising, business and other social institutions are riddled with hypocrisy.

These authors go on to show that advertisements stimulate the demand for immediate gratification, in children who lack the capacity to set priorities. It further sets up conflicts with parents over the child's demands for the advertised product, and further highlights conflict in the child's mind between the adult authority figures advertising the products and the parents. It promotes a confusion of concepts, rather than enhancement ego development, but it does make money for broadcasters, advertisers and corporations. Twenty-five per cent of the T.V. revenue comes from 7% of the programming aimed at children. This public health and public policy dilemma was highlighted by Franz Ingelfinger, M.D., in an editorial in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, April 8, 1976.

Diseases caused by the environment — for some reason called environmental rather than envirogenic — are prime public concerns. Hardly a day passes without some pesticide, industrial agent, drug or apparatus being indicated as responsible for some human disorder. These indictments however, are not without their dilemmas, for the suspect agent is often beneficial as well as purportedly harmful. Without pesticides, nutritional crops are at risk, without drugs, illness may go unchecked and without nuclear power plants, the economy may falter. Thus, society is forced to arrive at difficult risk/benefit decisions. Ironically enough, however, while chlordane is banned and aspirin impugned, an environmental hazard of far greater magnitude and with no redeeming benefits whatsoever (except for fattening a few pocketbooks) goes unchallenged. The hazard is the exaltation of violence on television, its victims are all our children, and the disease is a distortion of values, attitudes and morality. . .

I would like to echo the fervent plea of Peggy Charren, President of Action for Children's Television, "to encourage broadcasters to focus on the potential for delight and discovery, for mastery and self esteem, that children's television could bring to children."

My more pessimistic (or realistic) fantasy about the direction, force and momentum that these issues are taking is rather bleak.

The very nature of television production and programming of stories, news and life experience, tends to oversimplify and foreshorten the elaborate complexities of human emotions and human relationships. Even the better documentaries can only provide mere "cuts," prepackaged, subtly editorialized glimpses of the pathos and reality of the human condition. They provide a titillation of experience, but a mockery of involvement, stultifying the imagination, and preempting critical judgment. This leads to a decrease in tolerance, an increase in fear and anxiety, and an intensification of our cultural drift toward alienation from our fellow inhabitants of this planet Earth.

What follows, I fear, may be the creation of a significant portion of a generation of semi-literate, semi-educated automotons, programmed to consume the prepackaged foods and information supplied by our bureaucratically structured (state or private) corporate organizations in our post industrial, technocratic society.

By this declination, Orwell's 1984 might not arrive too far behind schedule, as our current use of television clearly provides the technology to produce that character structure in our citizens who might feel comfortable with, and perhaps choose, the Orwellian state.

Television Violence

Congressional Record, December 18, 1975, Senate

MR. MAGNUSON. Mr. President, today I received a Christmas card from a close friend that wished for "Peace on Earth." Last week I turned on my television and what I saw was not peace on Earth but murder, mayhem, and gratuitous violence. As we in the Senate and the rest of the Nation approach the Christmas season, the time of year for the joy of children and the gathering of families, I think it is useful to reflect on the impact of the single most important purveyor of violence in our society today — television programing.

Different people have different ideas about television in the United States. I personally think there is a lot of good programing nowadays. I certainly think programing has steadily improved over the years. But I also recognize that commercial television is a business. It is organized and designed to make profits. It does that very effectively. Advertisers today see television as the best selling tool that has ever been created by the hand of man. So advertisers clamor for the available space on television and pay dearly for that space when they can get it. In return, the television industry attempts to deliver as many viewers as possible to receive the advertiser's message. The vehicle for viewer acquisition is programing.

It is not surprising that there is great pressure within the television community to produce programs that attract and hold viewer attention as inexpensively as possible. Nor is it surprising that there is great pressure to hold down production costs of commercial television programing. This combination of influences, which is no one's fault, can carry the blame for most of what is bad today on television. In particular, I am thinking of the large number of violent actions portrayed every day in the Nation's living rooms. It is cheaper and more profitable to run shows that are low on dramatic content, high on physical action, and present stereotyped cliches.

There is too much violence on television today. The gratuitous use of violence for the sole purpose of attracting and maintaining audience attention is common programing practice. Violence portrayed without showing the human consequences is cheap. But this kind of violent portrayal degrades the viewer and the perpetrator. I am not surprised, and I hope that the television industry is not surprised, that 70 percent of the American people, according to a Television Guide survey published December 1, agree that there is far too much violence on television today.

The Nation and the Senate owe a debt of great gratitude to Senator John O. Pastore of Rhode Island for the role he has played over the years in focusing on the violence on television. In March of 1969, a major milestone in television programing occurred when Senator Pastore wrote a most important letter. He told then Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Robert H. Finch, that there was an obvious lack of research into the issue of possible connections between antisocial behavior and television violence. That correspondence led directly to the study conducted by a committee appointed by the U.S. Surgeon General. The Surgeon General's committee filed its report on January 19, 1972. Its basic conclusion was that —

> The causal relationship between televised violence and anti-social behavior is sufficient to warrant appropriate and immediate remedial action.

Senator Pastore has continued his efforts to focus the debate. So today there is a growing consensus that gratuitous violence on television is no longer an acceptable norm. The last two years have seen credible moves made both inside and outside the television industry to find some alternatives to historical violent programing patterns. I wish to commend Senator Pastore for his leadership and devoted work in this regard. A generation of children will be forever in his debt.

What do we know today about the connection of television violence to harmful social effects? Recently, Dr. Michael B. Rothenberg, M.D., a child psychiatrist on the faculty of the University of Washington in Seattle published an article in the Journal of the American Medical Association. His article summarized 146 papers representing 50 studies involving 10,000 children and adolescents from every conceivable background. Each of those studies shows, according to Dr. Rothenberg, that violence on television produces increased aggressive behavior in the young, and that immediate remedial action in terms of television programing is warranted.

In his summary of the research findings of the studies he reviewed, Dr. Rothenberg concludes:

> First. Novel, aggressive behavior sequences are learned by children from aggressive actions shown on television or in films.
>
> Second. There is a decreased emotional sensitivity to media violence as a result of the repetition of violence in the mass media.
>
> Third. There is no evidence that televised violence has an "aggression catharsis" — a draining off of aggressive energy.
>
> Fourth. Aggression can be inhibited by a televised reminder that the action was morally wrong in terms of the viewer's own ethical principles and by a portrayed awareness of the bloody, painful aftermath of the televised aggression.

Dr. Rothenberg points out that the 146 published papers he reviewed represent 50 separate scientific studies of all kinds — laboratory studies, correlational field studies and naturalistic experiments. And all show that viewing violence produces increased aggressive behavior in the young.

These results are not too surprising since television claims to its advertisers that it is a very persuasive medium for selling products. It seems a natural conclusion that television programing similarly influences viewers to engage in actions which are favorably or neutrally portrayed. That is what is so disturbing about studies such as L. Ormiston's "A Pilot Study of the Presentation of Constructive and Destructive Behaviors on Children's Cartoon Programing Entered on San Francisco Television." This unpublished paper, written in 1973, analyzed cartoon violence for the Committee on Children's Television in San Francisco. The researcher found that the average rate of destructive interaction in cartoons was one act per minute. She also found that 79 percent of the destructive interactions were rewarded. One can only conclude that children watching these programs are learning that destructive ways of interacting with others are not only appropriate but profitable.

A similar study in 1972 by Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, indicated that most television violence is performed not by criminals but by ordinary citizens and law officers and that these two latter groups rarely encounter due process of law as a consequence of this violence. A comparable study pointed out that violence depicted on television is rarely realistic and is rarely accompanied by the usually painful and grievous consequences of such actions in real life.

The evidence is there that children are influenced by violent portrayals on television. Violence perpetrated by strong role models is imitated. Violence which yields unfavorable results, such as punishment or victim injury, discourages imitation. Children do learn and remember aggressive behavior which is demonstrated on television. The relationship appears to be causal between television violence and subsequent aggressive behavior.

On the other hand, television can be very constructive. Children respond to positive behavior portrayed on television. Several studies now have demonstrated that children exposed to positive human interactions programing show higher levels of rule obedience, tolerance of delay, and persistence than children who watch aggressive programs. Young children have frankly admitted that they act out many of the behavioral sequences that they observe on television.

These results lead to disturbing conclusions if one looks at the current programing fare available to children on commercial television channels. Maturation is a long, hard course for every human being. Children are trying to get in touch with reality. Their perception of fantasy and reality is indistinct. They are trying hard to understand their emotions and their feelings. They are trying hard to relate to and understand the world in which they are thrust. In a word, children are complete human beings who have not yet acquired all of the tools of survival. To suggest that television, the most persuasive tool available to advertisers for sophisticated and mature human beings, is not affecting children who do not have the experience to distinguish truth from falsehood or exaggeration from understatement is ludicrous.

In the words of one researcher, "It is not a healthy environment if your outer world corroborates all of the worst and most fearful parts of your inner world." This reenforcement of the child's inner fears, doubts, and confusions is the devastating effect of violence on television.

The researchers claim that children who view television heavily can be desensitized to violence in real life. Their normal emotional responses to human suffering become blunted and this desensitization can actually cause increased acts of personal aggression. It also causes indifference and nonconcern for the fate of victims of real life violence. The more violence and aggression a youngster sees on television, regardless of his age, sex, or social background, the more aggressive he is likely to be in his own attitudes and behavior.

It is not my purpose to engage in a debate with the television industry or other persons about the accuracy of the findings of this research. Any reasonable person would have to conclude that there is substantial evidence currently available to support these conclusions. The risk of continuing the current course of TV fare is frightening. The industry has responded to the complaints with family viewing time, and tightened provisions in the NAB code. People who criticize these self-regulation efforts by the industry must be forthcoming with realistic solutions consistent with the constitutional framework protecting free speech.

The goal is neither undefinable nor unachieveable. One eloquent statement on the obligation of the industry with regard to the portrayal of violence particularly appeals to me:

> The presentation of techniques of crimes in such detail so as to invite imitations shall be avoided. . . . Violence shall not be presented in an attractive manner, nor to an extent such as will lead a child to believe they play a greater part in life than they do. . . .
>
> No considerations of expediency should be permitted to impinge upon the vital responsibility towards children and adolescents which is inherent in television. . . .

That language comes from the National Association of Broadcasters Code of of Conduct.

The NAB standard is the place to begin. The industry, the program producers, the advertisers, and the viewers can get gratuitous violence off the air. This Christmas season is the appropriate time to renew our efforts.

Strategies for Seeking Solutions to Television Violence

Sally Williams

These suggestions can be implemented by individuals, organizations or by a coalition of community groups:

- The efforts of one person caused the removal of cigarette advertising from television; The efforts of several individuals who wrote letters to the sponsors of violent shows caused sponsors to have their advertisements aired on non-violent programs; the efforts of a few mothers gave a station the needed community support to keep a good program on the air.
- The officially endorsed resolution that the California delegation presented to the governing board of the American Medical Association created the important anti-violent TV position taken by the AMA that will have national impact.
- The efforts of a coalition of community groups representing thousands of viewers has created more diversified employment at stations, better media programs in schools, and better programs on television.

Each strategy depends on a single initiator and change can only occur if some one person, YOU, initiates a project in your community.

1. Publish a Television Primer

REASON: Television stations are required to reflect regional differences. Your primer should reflect the uniqueness of your community and it should be written in the languages commonly spoken in your area.

SUGGESTED CONTENTS: A discussion of the influence of television on youth, positive approaches to utilizing television, viewer's rights and responsibilities, developmental stages of children and age-appropriate activities for children.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES: Ask your local newspapers to publish your primer. Ask your local television stations to discuss the primer on prime time public affairs programs.

2. Develop A Youth Profile

REASON: In 1976 the Federal Communications Commission informed television stations that the selection and production of children's programs must be based on information obtained from informed community resources regarding the needs, problems and interests of youth. The F.C.C. also informed broadcasters that children's programs should be diverse in content, informative as well as entertaining, age-appropriate, aired throughout the week, and that the programs should not be overburdened with commercials that take advantage of the immaturity of children.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES: Ask the organizations in your community that serve youth (schools, health care groups, social clubs, recreation centers, religious groups, etc.) to develop a summary of their programs and goals. Ask them to develop a list of the needs, problems, and interests of youth that they serve. Ask for suggestions regarding the utilization of television to reflect the documented needs of young people: such as, programs that respect their intelligence, stimulate their imaginations, and expand their resources.

- Ask your local stations to meet with you to discuss the profiles.
- Ask your local stations to discuss the profiles on prime-time public affairs programs.
- Ask your newspapers to publish a composite of the profile.

3. Study the Potential of Television

REASON: Television is one primary source of information for children. While it is teaching, it provides "hero" models, it demonstrates techniques for achieving goals, and it influences eating and buying patterns. The negative effects of television have been well researched; but little research has been devoted to developing the potential of television: Through thoughtful study, this generation of children will see television sets become "interactive information utilities." Sets can be more than receivers. Cable has the capacity to allow viewers to interact with programs.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

- Form an inter-disciplinary study group to monitor current television programming practices to foster experimentation.
- Develop a list of suggestions for replacing negative televised information with positive, diversified information.
- Study cable service in your area to determine if the public access channels could be more fully utilized and if the system is designed to handle two-way communication.
- Find out how your community spends cable revenues. Cable systems are granted their privilege of serving a community by a local governing body. The system shares a portion of its revenues with the local government. In major markets, the local government can require the system to provide special community television service.
- Study the utilization of closed-circuit television in your schools, libraries, and hospitals.
- Evaluate the potential of portable video equipment.
- Find out if your community is utilizing its UHF channels and Instructional Fixed Service Channels.
- Evaluate radio services for children. Is radio used creatively? Is radio used collaboratively? (For example, are some television programs simultaneously broadcast on radio in another language? Are radio talk shows used for follow-up discussion after important television shows?)

4. Involve Children

REASON: The ability to competently evaluate information is an acquired skill as is the ability to competently utilize communication tools. Even though 50 million American children are spending up to three hours a day learning from television, few children have been given the opportunity to understand that the producer of a TV program is as creative as an author in the selection of the material or viewpoint that s/he presents on television.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

- Ask your schools to develop courses and activities which help children understand how television programs are produced, how to evaluate televised information by comparing it to other information sources, how to understand TV as an art form (sound and sight), and how to understand TV as a persuader (messages and meanings).
- Develop opportunities for children to use portable television equipment, participate in studio productions, and have other first-hand experiences that will increase their understanding of television.
- Organize a Children's Media Access Project. Let youth be involved in making suggestions for television programs, in developing material for television, in expanding the horizons of television, and in experiencing whether or not they want a career as a producer of tomorrow's television.

5. Involve Local Colleges, Technical Academies, Professional Schools, and Universities

REASON: Only a few academic institutions teach courses covering the media as an art, as an educational tool, as a force in social and political development or as a career opportunity. Academic institutions have become very sensitive to community needs and ably rise to new challenges when concerns are expressed.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

- Ask your local colleges, technical academies, professional schools, and universities to develop interdisciplinary media arts committees representing faculty and students from the Departments or Colleges of Broadcasting, Education (particularly Early Childhood), Psychology, Sociology, Health Science, and others.
- Work with this interdisciplinary committee to develop courses that offer instruction in program production (most European countries require producers of children's programs to have a joint degree in Broadcasting Arts and a youth-related discipline); courses in Understanding and Doing the Media; courses which teach television research techniques; and courses which assist teachers, counselors, and health professionals to incorporate the influence of television in their youth service, teaching or counseling programs. For example, education programs should provide teachers, nurses, physicians and counselors with the opportunity to explore the influence of TV on the development of pre-school and school-age children. The professionals should have the opportunity to evaluate the role that TV plays in family activities, in family food consumption patterns, and in distressed family situations. It is no longer possible to teach child development without evaluating the current role of television and without planning for the future utilization of television as a major source of information for children.

6. Create a Mechanism for Consumer Feedback

REASON: Every television and radio station is required to maintain on-going dialogues with the viewers and listeners in the region served by the station. The stations are required to base their program selections on the information obtained through community contacts, report these results to the FCC, and maintain a public file containing all of this material.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

- Ask your stations to regularly schedule community meetings that have a meaningful agenda directed toward addressing community needs.
- Ask your stations to provide on-air announcements of the meetings and on-air reports from the meetings.
- Develop an information program regarding the viewers' rights and responsibilities in programming. Inform viewers and listeners that they can inspect each station file which contains the station's FCC application, employment records, and viewer/listener correspondence.
- Encourage viewers and listeners in your communities to write to stations, the Federal Communications Commission, and their elected State and Federal representatives.

7. Correspond With Sponsors and Advertisers

REASON: Frequently sponsors and advertisers buy air time on television but don't know when their ad will be aired or which program will be connected with its product. Recent surveys indicate that many viewers decide to buy products, *or not to buy them*, on the basis of the TV show associated with the product advertised.

Letter writing campaigns and advertising agency campaigns have alerted manufacturers to the fact that a good portion of viewers are not buying products that are advertised on excessively violent TV programs. Several companies have responded to viewer concern by requesting that their products be aired in non-violent program periods.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

- Ask viewers in your communities to strongly oppose violent television programs by writing or calling sponsors and advertising agencies. Suggest that your viewers' letters make comments such as:

> Dear Sponsor:
>
> On (date), our family watched (program) on (station and city) and found it to be an excessively violent program. We understand that you might be unaware that this program does not appeal to our family. Our family wants you to know that it is interested in receiving accurate information about the value and possible uses of your product during appropriate viewing hours; but, we must actively oppose purchasing your product as long as you sponsor programs which are not in accord with the values and goals we are fostering in our family and community.
>
> We anticipate your positive response and trust that you will advise us regarding changes in advertising practices that you have requested of your advertising agency and the station which aired your commercial. Thank you.
>
> Sincerely,

- Ask viewers in your community to actively request that limits be established for commercials in children's programs. Research indicates that advertisements should not be aimed at small children. Instead, the companies should sponsor children's programs ("This program has been brought to you by . . ."), and the "product ad" should be aired during family viewing hour when parents have the opportunity to evaluate the product advertised. Some stations have implemented this policy. Other stations cluster commercials at the half hour so that programs aren't interrupted with commercials. (Even older children lose the continuity, fantasy qualities, and emotional involvement with the story, when programs are repeatedly interrupted.)
- As communities work toward the best television service for children while they work for excellence in school programs and community services, the community should remember that most countries, (including our close neighbor, Canada) do not permit any product ads on children's television for they believe that children should have the freedom to develop competency in making decisions without the pressures of advertising. It is generally recognized that children should not make financial commitments or investment decisions that require a large amount of cash which is usually only available to children through their parents. More importantly, this philosophy reflects the generally accepted view that decisions regarding purchases should be thoughtfully guided by a parent who, without pressure or harassment, has the maturity to explore and discuss the best uses of the family dollars. The following resources can help YOU implement some of these strategies. We would like to hear about your success stories and your ideas for other effective strategies.

Bibliography

This is a selection of publications in the library of the Committee on Children's Television, at 1511 Masonic Ave., San Francisco. Materials do not circulate, but the library is open to anyone during regular business hours, 9-5, Monday-Friday. It is best to call ahead for an appointment: 863-9434.

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Resource List of Organizations

Action for Children's Television, Inc.
46 Austin Street
Newtonville, MA 02160
Several communities have active local children's television committees that have developed unique strategies to improve children's television. Write ACT for information regarding groups in your area. Also ACT publishes a newsletter containing very helpful information about their activities. They also publish several excellent bibliographies, and several books. Write for their list of publications.

Center for Science in the Public Interest
1779 Church St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
CSPI publishes information offering alternatives to the junk food advertised on television. If you want to participate in Food Day, encourage better school lunch programs, promote nutritious food in vending machines, etc., write to CSPI for information.

Committee on Children's Television, Inc.
1511 Masonic Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94117
(415) 863-9434
CCT is a racially diverse citizen action group. Parents, educators, doctors, nutritionists, and others devoted to improving television for children have organized to improve children's television in the Bay Area. CCT welcomes the opportunity to work with other local groups. Write to us for our list of publications. We have an extensive resource library that is open to the public by appointment.

Council on Children, Media, and Merchandising
1346 Connecticut Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20036
CCMM is a leader in representing the consumer interests of children before Congress and Federal agencies. Write to them for information regarding the advertising industry's efforts to capture the child consumer, and alternative programs for providing children with sound consumer information.

Ethel Daccardo
3245 Wisconsin Avenue
Berwyn, IL 60402
Ms. Daccardo publishes a booklet listing the names and addresses of the sponsors of television programs — "National Television Advertisers" is available from her for $1.50.

Federal Communications Commission
Public Information Office
1919 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

National Association for Better Broadcasting
P.O. Box 43640
Los Angeles, CA 90043
NABB publishes a quarterly newsletter which evaluates nationally distributed children's shows. It also distributes educational material which include an agreement between NABB and a Los Angeles television station not to air specific violent children's shows. Their newsletter, "Better Radio and Television," costs $3.00/year.

National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting
1028 Connecticut Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
NCCB publishes *access*, a newsletter of the citizen media reform movement. It reports on a variety of communications issues, particularly current FCC actions. NCCB recently published a report: "Prime Time Violence Profiles." Under the leadership of former FCC Commissioner Nicholas Johnson, Esq., NCCB received $25,000 from the American Medical Association to carefully evaluate violence on television.

National Correspondence Group
P.O. Box 1039
Palo Alto, CA 94302
Their concern is with violence levels in nationally distributed television programs. They publish a list of commercial sponsors ("Target List," $2.00), and encourage people to write letters of complaint.

Office of Communication
United Church of Christ
289 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10010
They offer consultation and legal assistance to improve television programming; special interest in minorities. Send for their list of excellent publications.

Publications

AVAILABLE FROM THE
COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN'S TELEVISION, INC.
1511 MASONIC AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94117

"TV Violence and Your Child" — A survey of recent research and literature regarding the effects of violent television program content on the behavior of children. $2.00 donation.

"TV and the Young Consumer" — An analysis of consumer needs of children and a proposal for the utilization of television to meet these needs. $2.00 donation.

"Know Your Competition" — A discussion of some highlights of child development issues and the relationship of these issues to the content of television programs. $2.00 donation.

"The Peaceable Kingdom" — A discussion of the Report and Policy Statement on Children's Television Programs issued by the FCC on November 6, 1974. $2.00 donation.

"Children and Television: A General Bibliography" — Includes pamphlets, papers, reports, journal articles, and books concerned with the effects of TV. An excellent source for selected reading. $1.00 donation.

"Guidelines for Selecting the Best of Children's TV" — Suggestions for evaluation of TV programming and what you can do to effectively monitor the programs that your children are watching. $1.00 donation.

"Kicking the Junk Food Habit: How to Counter TV Advertising of Heavily Sugared Foods" — Discusses health problems, how to kick the habit, alternatives, and suggestions for taking action at home, at school, and in child health stations. A bibliography and resource list are included. $1.00 donation.

"Seeking Solutions to Violence on Children's Television." $3.50 donation.